

Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee
February 8, 2022
Testimony of Luke Russell, Deputy Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and Members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, my name is Luke Russell and I am the Deputy Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio, often referred to as NAMI Ohio. On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio, I want to thank Representative Jarrells for his commitment to mental health and substance use disorder issues, and efforts to bring forward HB 453 that creates the “Recovery is Beautiful” license plate. NAMI Ohio is a strong proponent as we work to end the stigma around mental health.

We are proud that we are the largest mental health advocacy organization in the country representing over 500,000 Ohio citizens and their families whose lives have been invaded by mental illness. NAMI Ohio has 41 affiliates throughout Ohio representing all 88 counties. Each of you have constituents with mental illness and their families who have experienced the stigma of mental illness.

NAMI Ohio’s mission is to educate, support and advocate for individuals with serious mental illness and their families. We work on a daily basis to see that individuals not only gain access to valuable services and supports, but all become independent and valued participants in our communities. The funding we receive from HB 453 will go to help our 41 Affiliates provide educational trainings and support groups to individuals and their families seeking help to get back on their feet. Also, NAMI Ohio will increase efforts to educate the public on mental health issues. We know the quicker someone gets help the quicker they get back on their feet. Furthermore, NAMI Ohio believes the “Recovery is Beautiful” license plates send a signal that serious mental illness is a disease like any other that no longer needs to be hidden and kept in the shadows. Individuals and their families need no longer to feel alone and passing HB 453 show our Ohio’s leaders are behind them.

Thank you for your time and attention today, and I am open to any comments or questions you may have regarding this legislation. Feel free to contact me at Luke@namiohio.org or 614-224-2700.